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Drawing of John Cowper Powys by Ivan Opffer, 1920

MELVON L. ANKENY

Lloyd Emerson Siberell, Powys 'Bibliomaniac' and 'Extravagantic'

John Cowper Powys referred to him as 'a "character", if you catch my meaning, this good Emerson Lloyd S. — a very resolute chap (with a grand job in a big office) & a swarthy black-haired black-coated Connoisseur air, as a Missioner of a guileless culture, but I fancy no fool in his office or in the bosom of his family!'¹ and would later describe him as 'a grand stand-by & yet what an Extravagantic on his own our great Siberell is for now and for always!'²

Lloyd Emerson Siberell, the 'Extravagantic' from the midwestern United States, had a lifelong fascination and enthusiasm for the Powys family and in pursuit of his avocations as magazine editor, publisher, writer, critic, literary agent, collector, and corresponding friend was a constant voice championing the Powys cause for over thirty years. Sometimes over-zealous, always persistent, unfailingly solicitous, both utilized and ignored, he served the family faithfully as an American champion of their art.

He was born on 18 September 1905 and spent his early years in the small town of Kingston, Ohio; 'a wide place in the road, on the fringe of the beautiful Pickaway plains the heart of Ohio's farming region, at the back door of the country, so to speak.' In his high school days he 'was always too busy reading the books [he] liked and playing truant to ever study seriously...' He 'enjoyed life' and was 'a voracious reader but conversely not the bookworm type of man.'³ At seventeen he left school and worked a year at the Mead Corporation paper mill in Chillicothe, Ohio and from this experience he dated his interest in the art and craft of paper and paper making. He attended Chillicothe Business College and at the age of nineteen began his lifelong career with the Norfolk and Western Railway Company primarily based at the company's Cincinnati and Columbus, Ohio locations. He would always refer to himself as a railroad man by vocation and a literary man by avocation.

Siberell was a brash young man of twenty-six when in 1932 he first wrote to the three literary Powys brothers, John Cowper, T.F., and Llewelyn, expressing his admiration and interest in their writings. This initiated a correspondence which continued with Llewelyn until his death in 1939, and for twenty-six years with John, ceasing in 1958. Siberell had been reading works by the Powys family since he was seventeen years of age. 'There were times', he confided to a friend, 'when I was swept off my feet by the reading of their books but I soon picked myself up and dusted off my pants and went on living my own life as I saw fit. No one in this world appreciated the style of Llewelyn, the story telling ability of Theodore Francis or the rhetorical gymnastics of John Cowper better than I.'⁴

T. F. Powys's response to Siberell's first letter of introduction and praise was characteristically limited, short but polite. 'I am very glad that my books please you so much. As I live near to my brother Llewelyn I will be able to tell him how kindly you speak of us. I am glad that you have read "Unclay" Yes I think "Unclay" is the best.'⁵ Increasingly fascinated with their work, Siberell again wrote to the brothers, broaching the idea of publishing a bibliographic check list of their works and asking that they sign copies of their works for him. A succinct response from T.F. brought his correspondence to a close. 'I beg you to pardon me. I am quite unable to deal with the signing or packing of any books — Be so good as to send none here — Or have any sent — About the other matter I am handing yours to Ll Powys who will reply.'⁶ The tone and brevity of the correspondence caused Siberell to remark that T.F. 'seems slightly

sarcastic which is such a contrast to J.C.P who is a very winning personality with a very sweet disposition.⁷ In his own response to Siberell, John Cowper innocently noted that he 'was so interested to hear you have heard from Theodore.' He went on to analyse the brothers' talents: 'I think we all have a great deal in common. I think Theodore is the most original genius & that Llewelyn is the greatest artist in words & the most integral & winning personality and that I myself can tell the most exciting and *convincing* story!'⁸

It is not difficult to imagine the diffidence with which the overtures of this midwestern American were received by the Powys brothers. Yet the suggested bibliographies intrigued them and would ultimately forge a Siberell-Powys relationship. Llewelyn attempted to shield both T.F. and John Cowper from active involvement in the project. He saw no reason not to proceed but warned Siberell that T.F. 'is very much of a recluse and would not wish to be troubled over the matter.' Llewelyn offered to write a short introduction to John's checklist and also give Siberell 'a free hand with my own books and ... any information you required'⁹ but 'I certainly would not trouble either of my brothers about forewords or in any other way.'¹⁰

Despite Llewelyn's admonitions, Siberell was pursuing an ongoing correspondence with John at his 'Phudd Bottom' home in Hillsdale, New York. John Cowper had already responded to Siberell's proposal with some bibliographic information. While voicing approval and suggesting that Siberell contact Simon and Schuster for guidance, he stressed that 'My own temperament is such and the fatality of my peculiar nature is such that I *cannot* really & truly be interested in helping you with this scheme.' The long letter continued with further protestations of non-interest, noting a press of personal problems and correspondence demands which were distracting him from concentrating on his current writing. I appreciate your generous offer & say go ahead - but I cannot help you with it; no! not so much as by a single note or scrawl. ...' — all of this interspersed repeatedly with the fervently underlined '*I could not do it.*'¹¹ Clifton Fadiman of Simon and Schuster counselled that the idea of a bibliography of John Cowper's works was premature but Siberell was determined to proceed.

In July of 1933 he used his free railway pass to travel to Hillsdale, in upstate New York and his first encounter with John Cowper and 'Phudd Bottom'. Although he had read and collected John's works for years and had heard him lecture, they had never met. His detailed notes of this first meeting clearly underscore his excitement:

When Mr. Powys came in from his hike he had his crooked hazel walking stick, on his head he wore a crushed & battered felt hat over his touzled, curly grey locks of hair. He wore canvas athletic shoes with rubber soles, large gray wool sox pulled up over corduroy trousers. He had on a gray flannel shirt over which he wore a sleeveless leather jerkin. After stripping off the jacket he donned a light jersey sweater and threw himself down upon the day bed and with zest & enthusiasm he began his enchanting line of inspiring conversation which amazed me so I could hardly reply in language suitable for the occasion.¹²

Siberell was gratified if somewhat embarrassed by John's insistence that he was 'the Pure American type like Bryan & Webster & those with none of the vanities of the mongrel Americans. I love pure types and shall always remember you as the true American uncorrupted with the petty prejudices & vanities of the high pressure Americans.'¹³ This first meeting was eminently successful and on his departure, Siberell was provided with introductions to Powys friends to meet in New York City which included G. Arnold Shaw, Reginald ('Rex') Hunter

(Gamel Woolsey's first husband), and Lola Catesby Jones. He bade John Cowper a happy farewell and departed with an inscribed copy of *The Meaning of Culture* — and Phyllis Playter's recipe for Devonshire Cream.

The search for a publisher for either combined or separate bibliographies of the Powys brothers proceeded with inquiries to Chatto and Windus, Constable and Co., Hogarth Press, Simon & Schuster, and Lynd Ward of the Equinox Co-operative Press among others. None were interested. Siberell was finally referred to Paul Johnston of Woodstock, New York, editor, and originally joint publisher with Virginia Fitzwater, of *The Book Collector's Packet*. By August, 1933 Siberell had reached an agreement with Johnston to publish one bibliography, that of John Cowper.

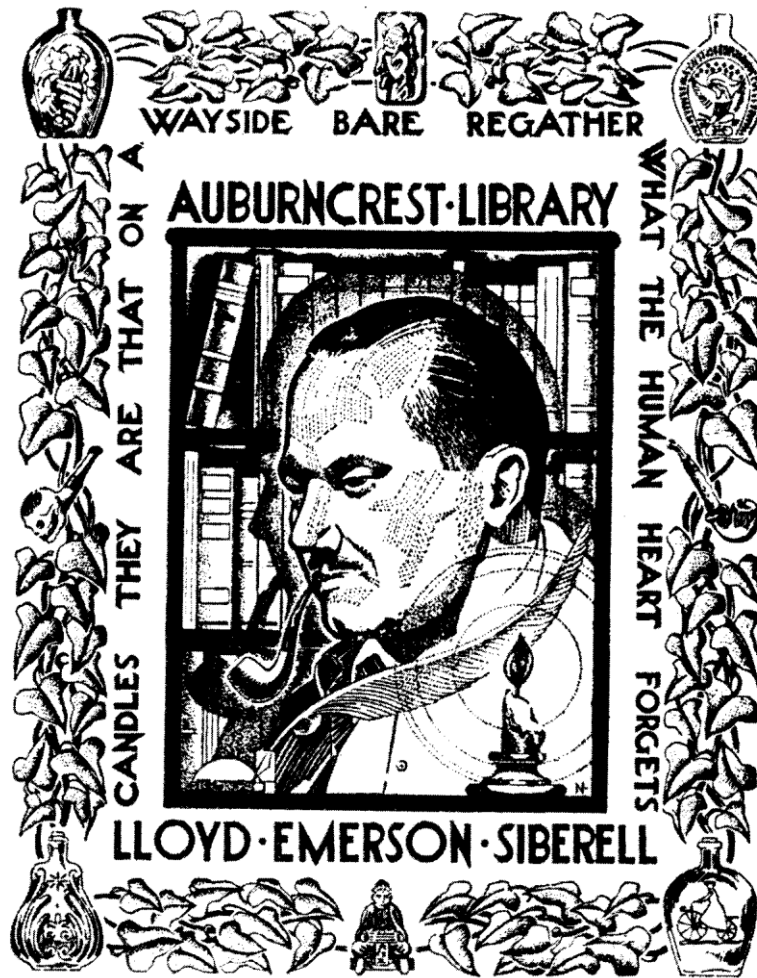
John had earlier alerted Siberell of a possible complication. 'Someone has sent me the enclosed clipping of a Rival Bibliography "nearing completion" cut from the New York Herald Sunday Edition.' The enclosure, with the heading 'John Cowper Powys, To the Editor of Books,' read: 'I have been for the past four months engaged in the compilation of a bibliography and check-list of the first editions of John Cowper Powys. As this work is nearing completion, and before sending it to the printers, I should like to get in touch first with any one who may have or know of any material relating to Powys that may not yet have come to my attention, [signed] Beltran Morales ... Chicago, Ill.' John asked, 'What are we to think of this? I have never heard of Beltran Morales nor have any idea who he may be!'¹⁴

This report convinced Siberell to focus on the completion and publication of John Cowper's bibliography, deferring Llewelyn's and T. F.'s until later. Apprised of the possibility of a rival publication, Llewelyn reiterated that he would write an introduction to his brother's bibliography but only after it had been accepted for publication. Illness eventually forced him to abandon it altogether. John notified Siberell of Llewelyn's grave indisposition, and the following week forwarded his own 'sort of little introduction wh [sic] I guess you & Mr. Johnston want. I hope so! It is written in acknowledgment of the devotion & single-heartedness of your labours.'¹⁵

Johnston's progress with the bibliography was slowed by desperate personal financial difficulties (symptomatic of the ongoing effects of the Great Depression) and his losing struggle to publish *The Book Collector's Packet*. The final issue of *The Packet* appeared in December 1933, publication being suspended until its revival by Norman Forgue and the Black Cat Press of Chicago in 1938. By December 1933, the bibliography had been set in type but no publication date was in sight. Siberell sympathized with Johnston's economic plight but he had an equal if not a greater personal interest in getting the book out.

You see Mr. Johnston, I am in fully as bad financial straits, as you, except perhaps, that I have a regular income to live on, small as it is. I had not told you before but I borrowed the money which I advanced, on an insurance policy of mine and very soon I must make it good, else it will become void; and on account of my family [Siberell's first wife and two young sons] I could not in fairness to them, allow it to be cancelled. When I borrowed the amount I expected that six months would see the book out and earning some of the money back so that I could make the policy loan payments as they came due.¹⁶

With publication worries mounting, Siberell was advised of John Cowper's imminent plans to return to England. He suggested a visit to Cincinnati for a final lecture but John declined. 'It will be just about all, & I daresay a bit more, than my strength can manage to get thro' the Customs in



Bookplate designed for Lloyd Emerson Siberell in the 1930s

New York & sail away in June — I am not going to attempt, I don't think, *any* farewell lecture. I must gather all my strength & all my spirit together now to finish my Autobiography & transact my affairs — & get on board — nothing beyond this is conceivable ...'¹⁷ Anxious to see John before his departure, Siberell travelled again to upstate New York using rail passes. He rendezvoused with Paul Johnston and together they went to Hillsdale for a final meeting with John on 20 May 1934. John duly memorialized the confusion of the visit with an inscription in Siberell's copy of *The Complex Vision*: 'Now on May 20th in a mad rush of packing and finishing my autobiography signed & sealed & delivered with deep gratitude to my friend Lloyd Emerson Siberell.'¹⁸

Siberell returned to Cincinnati and the growing realization that Johnston would be unable to publish the bibliography. He failed in his attempts at finding another publisher; even proposing that Simon & Schuster publish a limited edition of *Autobiography* and include the bibliography, using the completed plates at cost. When Fadiman rejected this proposal, Siberell determined to publish the book himself under an imprint of his own creation, The Ailanthus Press. Letterhead of the new enterprise included the description: Ailanthus Press — Book Hunters, Bookseller's Representatives, and Publishers. The press was named for the ailanthus

trees which Siberell had observed on one of his New York City visits lining 'the little secluded nook of a street called Patchin Place' and after John Cowper's poem, "The Ailanthus". Some years later, the lines 'Candles they are, that on a wayside bare Re-gather what the human heart forgets' were incorporated into Siberell's distinctive bookplate designed by Mathias Noheimer of Cincinnati.¹⁹

An edition of 350 copies of *A Bibliography of the First Editions of John Cowper Powys* by Lloyd Emerson Siberell, preface by Siberell, introduction by John Cowper Powys, was published on 8 October 1934 as a commemoration of John Cowper's sixty-second birthday. At Johnston's request, his contribution to the book was acknowledged only by a note on the final page, 'DESIGNED BY P.J.' The publication met with enthusiastic response from John Cowper and



John Cowper Powys in New Mexico, 1927

Llewelyn. 'You have done it well,' John wrote. 'My brother Llewelyn was particularly delighted with it & thinks very highly of your work in it and so do I and my friend Miss Playter,' adding a later aside; 'You wd have been amused to hear me describe you as if you were a character in one of my books to my brother Llewelyn.'²⁰

Philip Brooks in his column in the *New York Times Book Review*, characterized the *Bibliography* as 'a thoroughly satisfactory work of its genre'²¹ and John T. Winterich in *The Saturday Review of Literature*, reflected that it was 'a serviceably printed volume, and, what is not too common in labors of love, the text is competently organized and presented.'²² However, the major review appearing in England in *The Book-Collector's Quarterly* was critical of Siberell's accomplishment. P. H. Muir's review began 'This is a job only half done' and ended 'to call this a Bibliography of John Cowper Powys is a misnomer.' Muir focussed on Siberell's omission of the lecture syllabi while nevertheless selecting as the book's only illustration a title page from the syllabus of an Oxford University Extension Lecture, c. 1900. He also found fault with what he considered a failure to address the 'complications of the transatlantic publication of Mr. Powys' other books' and certain re-issues.²³ Siberell defended his decision to list only what he considered true first editions as clearly stated by the book's title *A Bibliography of the First Editions* and responded that he had not 'presumed to compile a complete bibliography of all of Mr. Powys' works, embracing reprints and all miscellaneous material known to exist.'²⁴ Muir's criticism rankled Siberell and ill-feelings would resurface later regarding another of his Powys bibliographic projects.

Years later Siberell expressed his own reservations about the work. In 1939 he responded to the compliments of William C. Deny, (author of *John Cowper Powys: An Interpretation* (Boston: Meador, 1938) cited by Langridge as the only critical work devoted entirely to J. C. Powys published prior to his death):

I don't think my Bibliography is deserving of quite the amount of praise which you give it for it is nearly out of date by now, which is the great difficulty of a definite [*sic*] bibliography of a living author. I did not put in there all the data I have on his books as I was concerned only with the first issues of his books. I have huge files of information on the Powys brothers and much correspondence pertaining to them by which I plan some day to do a work similar to yours about the three brothers John Llewelyn and T.F. but that cannot be for sometime for I, like you, am forced to earn my living and make writing my avocation. I work in the Traffic Department of a Railroad Office, and do my literary work of evenings and week ends. I spent two years of my spare time compiling various Powys bibliographies and do sorta consider myself consequently, somewhat of an authority on their works but not nearly an expert.²⁵

And in 1953 writing to E. E. Bissell, the eminent Powys collector in England, he stated that he was 'very much afraid the publication of my "A Bibli— of the First Editions of John Cowper Powys" almost twenty years ago was a mistake. I doubt the wisdom of anyone publishing a bibliography of the works of any living author. They get out of date too quickly. But in 1934 I was young and over enthusiastic and perhaps over anxious to see justice done the works of JCP prematurely. One mellows with age.'²⁶

The publishing venture was not a financial success. Siberell reported to Johnston in 1936 that he had 'been unable to sell more than 50 copies and have by no means gotten back what I put in it.'²⁷ Although the total publication costs of \$238.43 are minuscule by today's standards, in the

1930s they were a considerable amount. The total included composition charges advanced to Paul Johnston, printing of 350 copies, and binding of 200 by a Cincinnati firm. Detailed notes on the distribution of the publication indicate 48 copies sold, 16 copies sent for review, and 122 copies used for exchange or presentation for a total distribution of only 186 copies through April 1952. Siberell's personal enthusiasm, as it would time and again, had not found an equal public response.

Characteristic of Siberell was his involvement in numerous simultaneous projects, many of which would not be realized. Biographical data towards the end of his life could boast of entries in fourteen 'Who's Who' type of directories, including four published in London. Innumerable listings as member and often as office-holder in local, state, and national organizations attested to his wide-ranging interests in transportation, literature, business, and civic groups. Hence his belief in the maxims: 'If you want a thing done, ask a busy man, no other has time' and 'It's your life — go star in it.'²⁸

In 1933 he became business manager of *The Outrider: A Journal for Literates* (renamed with issue No. 2 as *The Outrider: A Journal for the Civilized Minority*) but later declined editorship of this Cincinnati publication as it floundered and then ceased. The short-lived publication (one volume of four numbers, November 1933-May 1934, four to eight pages each) had a notable list of contributors including Ezra Pound, Rex Hunter, Llewelyn Powys, Edgar Lee Masters, and Witter Byner. A number of these contributions were secured by Siberell as a direct result of his growing network of Powys connections. *The Outrider's* four issues served to disseminate publication news and positive recommendations for such Powys titles as *Impassioned Clay*, *Glory of Life*, *Earth Memories*, and *Weymouth Sands*. Llewelyn sent an essay 'Old Threads for New Weavers' (included later in *Damnable Opinions*) which was published in Volume 1, Number 2 and when payment was not forthcoming, he took Siberell to task. 'I am too poor to write for nothing and I also feel there is something very unfair and immoral about papers which expect to exist on charity. Writers are always poorer than the poorest editors.'²⁹ Responding to Siberell's report on *The Outrider's* uncertain financial status, he observed 'Certainly you have some spirit or shall we say "pep" out there in Cincinnati. To a Dorsetshire man it would seem the height of unreliability to start a journal on so little money that its second issue had to look for outside support. I would not involve yourself too deeply in this concern if I were you — and I certainly, under the circumstances, would not wish you to trouble yourself further about any money for me.'³⁰

Indeed, at this point in his correspondence, Llewelyn acted the critical but wise counsellor somewhat in the tone of the *Advice to a Young Poet* letters to Kenneth Hopkins. Tempering his censure, he wrote Siberell that he had 'spent some time in writing to you a letter of criticism — but then remembering that you were at work on a bibliography as a labour of love and remembering your enthusiasms and a certain intensity of spirit to be detected in your letters I have refrained from mailing it.' Nevertheless, he went on to express his annoyance 'at having you at the end of your letter casually send a message to "Theodore" when for every reason you should not have ventured to address him so familiarly. If your interest in his literary work seems to you to justify a certain freedom you should at least refer to him by his own chosen literary title "T F Powys." Much of the grace and dignity of life depends upon sensitive reserves in civil intercourse.'³¹ In a later letter he again expounded:

Reserve is very valuable in social relationships — and it is a mistake to give yourself too lightly and so to speak to wear your heart on your sleeve for the daws to peck at. If I

had found this the way of "True Americans" I would not have liked them so much, and if I thought it was a general practice I think the sooner it is at an end the better. The respect and affection that you feel for any one is not expressed well by patting them on the back ... It is better to be uncertain, tentative, full of hesitations than bold as brass! My brother Theodore is nearly sixty a venerable old fishmaid philosopher and I know he would resent being called by his Christian name by a man half his age and a stranger. I would not dare show him a letter of this kind lest he think it typical of American manners.³²

The form of address in the correspondence between the two men generally remained at the formal level of 'Dear Mr. Siberell' and 'Dear Mr. Powys', sometimes relaxing to 'My Dear Mr. Siberell' and 'My Dear Mr. Powys' until Llewelyn's final letter in November 1939. However, the criticism of Siberell's manner and method abated, perhaps with the realization that from Llewelyn's viewpoint he was irredeemable and certainly uncontrite.

After the publication of the John Cowper bibliography, Siberell pursued other Powys related projects. His suggestion that he be authorized to edit a collection of John's letters was met with a stern refusal. 'But, friend Siberell, as far as I have authority in such a nice matter—& I suppose I have *some* while I am yet alive — I must, firmly, gratefully, & gently, *forbid* it *altogether* ... I would rather that no one began collecting or editing them *till I am dead*.' ³³ And John later reiterated 'I do not wish any of my letters published either before or after my death *except by someone of my own blood* — I have younger relatives, nephews for instance, quite able to do it, even if no literary brother or sister survived me — or by someone, who knows me intimately in England, and has been especially delegated by me for such a task.'³⁴

Later the same year, Siberell decided to compile a volume of bibliographical check lists of selected modern authors. This was to include the three literary Powys brothers and additional authors whom he also collected such as Arthur Davison Ficke, Edgar Lee Masters, and Louis Marlow/Louis Wilkinson. He planned to include information on the lecture syllabi of John Cowper, Llewelyn, and Louis Wilkinson and he began writing to various individuals and institutions in the United States and England for bibliographic data. He posted an initial letter to Wilkinson and almost simultaneously received a letter from Llewelyn asking for help in providing bibliographic information for Wilkinson's forthcoming book on the Powys brothers, *Welsh Ambassadors*. Llewelyn added an urgent postscript: I have just written out a list of my books but I can see I shall never get this in any kind of order without your help — so for God's sake come to my rescue and send me any kind of paper that will *make a show* — never mind whether it is accurate ... I beg you to help me with this damned bibliography ...', ³⁵

A series of almost daily letters from Siberell to Llewelyn in early August detailed the compilation of bibliographies for inclusion in *Welsh Ambassadors* with Siberell characterizing himself as 'a sort of grotesque collector of Powys book data, a walking Powys dictionary, so to speak.'³⁶ And Llewelyn for once relaxed his 'sensitive reserve' and addressed his letter of thanks to 'My dear Siberell, It is most good of you to have responded with such generosity to my appeal — I was put to it. Never before had I appreciated the value of your unobtrusive and magnanimous labours.'³⁷

In Wilkinson's *Welsh Ambassadors: Powys Lives and Letters*, published under the name of Louis Marlow, Siberell was credited for the Llewelyn Powys Check List, Siberell and P H. Muir for the John Cowper Powys Check List, and B. van Thal and P H. Muir for the T. F. Powys Check List.³⁸ Siberell would have preferred to receive sole credit for the three lists and at the

very least joint credit for the T. F. Powys Check List. In a 1936 article, 'The Brothers Powys: Some First Editions,' Siberell revisited his earlier ill feelings towards Muir's criticism of his bibliographic expertise and claimed sole authorship of the checklists, stating that 'aside from a superfluous note or two these gentlemen had nothing whatsoever to do with the check list of T F. Powys' books which they very boldly put their name above, in "WELSH EMBASSADORS". [sic] The same is true of my check list of John Cowper Powys' books in the same volume above which Mr. Muir's name is inserted, although several notes of his were added to my check list of J. C. Powys ... The checklists of the three Powys brothers were compiled by me at the request of Llewelyn Powys especially for the above volume.'³⁹ Siberell noted errors in Muir and van Thai's previously published Powys bibliographies which had been corrected in the *Welsh Ambassadors* checklists and concluded that his bibliographic information had been used as the basis for the corrections. An earlier letter from Wilkinson should have explained all. I am indeed indebted to you for your permission to use your excellent Bibliographies, and shall of course acknowledge gratefully my indebtedness at the beginning of the book. Use will be made of both your J.C.P Bibliographies, and of your L.I.P. Bibliography: but it is thought that, as Mr. van Thal is connected with the firm of Chapman & Hall, who are publishing the book, it will be better to use the Bibliography that he and Mr. Muir have made of T.F.P.'s work. I have sent to Chapman & Hall a list that T.F.P made for me himself, to check that of Messrs. van Thal and Muir.'⁴⁰ Yet Siberell persisted in his views. In his complimentary letter to Wilkinson after reading *Welsh Ambassadors*, he noted 'that Mr. Muir and Mr. van Thal took the credit for the T. F. Powys bibliography while nearly all the data used was that which I compiled, although they did add notes throughout. I don't blame you for that though, and it is alright.'⁴¹

The projected volume of bibliographical check lists of modern authors was abandoned by Siberell although two of the Powys bibliographies appeared separately in journals. 'A Checklist of the First Editions of T. F. Powys' was published in *The Book Collector's Journal*⁴² and 'A Bibliographical Check-list of the First Editions of Llewelyn Powys' with 'a Prefatory word' by Alyse Gregory appeared in the first revival of *The Book Collector's Packet* by Norman Forgue in Chicago.⁴³

The year 1935 saw the beginning of a friendship which led to Siberell's major involvement in the publication of Llewelyn Powys's *A Baker's Dozen*. Hal Trovillion of Herrin, Illinois, co-owner and publisher of the *Herrin Daily Journal* and founder of the Trovillion Private Press at the Sign of the Silver Horse, contacted Siberell after noting a listing for the Ailanthus Press in the *Bibliography of Modern American Presses* by Irvin Haas (1935). An exchange of publications (including a copy of the John Cowper bibliography), correspondence and personal visits was to lead to a continuing friendship with Hal and his wife Violet. In 1938 Trovillion wrote Siberell of his plans for a two month automobile tour of England. He had a letter of introduction from Charles J. Finger, editor of *All's Well* in Fayetteville, Arkansas, and wanted to meet John Cowper. Siberell replied: 'Yes, you must by all means see Powys. I'll wager you'll never see another like him anywhere. He is a remarkable figure in Modern Literature ... Powys is the only one I have met. The rest are letter paper acquaintances.'⁴⁴ Siberell provided John's current address in Wales and also wrote to John and to Louis Wilkinson of the Trovillions' impending visit. He reported that Llewelyn had also responded 'that he hoped you would visit Switzerland for he could find you a lovely place to stay in his beautiful valley.'⁴⁵ Hal and Violet Trovillion's trip to England (accompanied by their staff photographer) included a rewarding visit with John Cowper and Phyllis in Corwen, Wales. 'Yes I had a very happy visit from your friends from Herrin,' John wrote, '& as you said wd be the case we got on *top-notch!* & all was happy as

a marriage-bell. They went only with benedictions on their path from all of us of Corwen for they were popular here as well as in my cell over the Dee!' ⁴⁶

Although Switzerland was not included on their itinerary, Trovillion wrote to Llewelyn soon after his return to America. He described the operation of his private press and suggested that Llewelyn might be interested in having a publication added to the press's list. Llewelyn replied that he had 'never written poetry so that is out of the question. — I have by me however two sets of essays which are waiting for the time when a sufficient number shall have accumulated for a volume to be published.'⁴⁷ Siberell, informed of Llewelyn's response, wrote to him applauding the news of the proposal, offering his own contribution of an introduction to the volume, and detailing Trovillion's offer of 50% of the net proceeds for an edition of 500 copies. Llewelyn's first thought was 'to send your friend two little volumes of Essays that I wish to be preserved and let him choose the volume that appeals to him. (I) England's Year — containing essays on Holidays and Feast Days! (II) Country Memories.'⁴⁸ Plagued by continuing ill health, he managed with Alyse Gregory's assistance to assemble and dispatch one collection of essays to Trovillion by March, 1939; apparently drawing from both volumes and giving it the title 'A Baker's Dozen.' He acknowledged Siberell's contribution, telling him 'What a faithful friend you have always been to me. It's a pleasure to think of your writing the introduction for this little book.'⁴⁹ But always the critical wordsmith, Llewelyn in a later letter enclosed 'some notes and a retyped copy of your introduction on the chance that you might find in it some suggestions that might suit your judgment. I myself have always been one to take advantage of every hint that the wind blows to me as was Jonathan Swift. — I offer this copy with all diffidence knowing how opinions can vary and in every case the suggestions I make are unimportant so if you feel like it chuck my typescript into your stove!'⁵⁰ He answered a defensive response noting that Siberell's 'unfailing friendliness ... made it seem possible for me to write about it with the same intimate fearlessness which I invariably use towards for example J.C.P., but you must not think I do not appreciate and admire the essay as it stands and I surely was arrested by your spirited defence of the slight differences that fell under my notice.'⁵¹ Photographic illustrations for *A Baker's Dozen* were supplied by Llewelyn, including 'the best photograph I have ever seen of Montacute Abbey and Church ... I have purchased rights to use it without acknowledgment.'⁵² Noticing the device which Llewelyn used on his books and manuscripts and thinking it should be incorporated into the publication, Siberell asked about its significance. Llewelyn explained: 'The sign is called the ANKH. It's the oldest human symbol probably phallic and often used by Egyptians as a Resurrection sign — carried in the hand. The top is the nature the rest penis and testicles.' He further noted, 'He had as well hold a cabbage stalk when dead. It is a symbol for the living', echoing the inscription later carved in Portland stone above Chydyok.⁵³ The ankh was included in the design of the title page and the colophon statement of *A Baker's Dozen*.

Llewelyn did not live to see the completed volume. In his final letter to Siberell, he addressed him as 'My dear Siberell,' requesting 'If you will allow me to drop the Mr. seeing we have had for so long so friendly and affectionate a relationship' and noting his impression of a photograph which Siberell had sent of himself. 'What a powerful, formidable looking fellow you are. By god I was impressed by your countenance ... I signed the sheets Mr. Trovillion sent to me ... I eagerly look forward to the book's coming out. I long to see it. I believe I am getting better so perhaps I shall yet live to see you one day when Hitler is safely housed on St. Helena and we are able to loll at ease under the unvanquished Sun ... Your old friend Llewelyn Powys'⁵⁴ He died one month later.

A Baker's Dozen included a publisher's preface quoting Alyse (misspelled as Alyce)

Gregory's telegram of 4 December 1939 from Clavadel, Davos Platz: 'LLEWELYN POWYS DIED SATURDAY' and incorporated almost verbatim (without acknowledgement) her later note 'I think I told you in my last letter that my husband was cremated and as soon as war regulations will permit his ashes are to be brought back to be buried on the Dorset downs. He died offering his life-long epicurean belief in annihilation without fear, saying his life had been a happy one, and that he now wished to die quietly'⁵⁵

Siberell sent letters of condolence to Alyse and John Cowper and his tribute, 'The Death of Llewelyn Powys' was hastily included in the final issue of *The Book Collector's Packet* before its second suspension with the December 1939 issue. His lyrical effusion began 'Llewelyn Powys is dead and one of the most gifted hands that ever held a pen is stilled forever' and ended 'The literary solar system has lost a bright star that scintillated briefly through the immensity of space before plunging comet-like to that bottomless eternity called death. To illuminate the future firmament of letters he has bequeathed some thirty odd volumes of the most brilliant prose of the twentieth century.'⁵⁶

Although *A Baker's Dozen* was copyrighted in 1939, it was not completed for distribution until May 1940 due to delays caused by the illustrator, Mathias Noheimer, a protégé of Siberell's. He had agreed to do the illustrations without charge while pursuing other paid projects. Trovillion reported to Siberell in December 1939 that printing of the book was complete except for the chapter heading sketches from Noheimer and the final drawing was not completed until the latter part of March 1940. The delay prompted a number of pointed letters from Alyse both to Trovillion and Siberell. Kenneth Hopkins later noted a lack of affinity between Trovillion and Alyse Gregory, and his persistent misspelling of her first name due in part to difficulties deciphering her handwriting.⁵⁷ Letters to Trovillion from both Llewelyn and Alyse were quite often sent to Siberell for his transcription and he was also guilty of the same errors of misspelling even though he was familiar with Alyse's published work.

Alyse confided to Siberell that she had written:

A rather testy letter to Mr. Trovillion two days ago and now I have your letters with the enclosures. It is like living at constant high pressure over here. The news has just been brought in that *Holland is taken* — and I feel that art and letters must be snatched out of the pool of destruction for as long as possible, for all civilization trembles in the balance while these barbarians with their ferocious intentions and fluid morals and their instruments of destruction, go galloping forward over the gallant little countries that are unable to defend themselves. ... Will you tell Mr. Trovillion I hope my letter did not seem uncivil — I would have been glad to have the page proofs of the book, but I know how impossible it was for you to foresee this delay.⁵⁸

Siberell interceded and shouldered much of the blame. He wrote to Alyse, assuring her 'that the delay is not Trovillion's fault. If it must be blamed on anyone, it is I who deserve the credit as I was the party who insisted on Mathias Noheimer illustrating the volume. That was the cause of the six month's delay and very little of it should be laid at Mr. Trovillion's door. Aside from his not sending you page proofs which I understand is the custom of most publishers and the errors he made in the prospectus, there is very little to blame him for.'⁵⁹ He sent a copy of this letter to Trovillion adding it 'may either appease her or stir her up more than ever. Possibly the war has a tendency to make her vitriolic or belligerent. I wouldn't take her remarks too seriously as the book is already out and there is nothing that can rectify the past.'⁶⁰

After receiving a copy of the book, Alyse offered both praise and criticism. 'First let me say that I think it is a *beautiful* little book. And I want to congratulate you on your Introduction which I think reads wonderfully well — with a style of your own both weighty and eloquent, and I know my husband would have been happy to see your two names together — and would have been proud to read again your words about him — so generously and understandingly spoken.' She concluded with a number of '*slight*' objections to Trovillion's Publisher's Preface — including the misspelling of her name — and stressed that 'My husband was never in any way influenced by the writings of Lytton Strachey of whom he felt critical — and I think it is a little misleading to say that his writing is an *admixture* of the influences of, etc. — for he had a very individual style of his own.'⁶¹ A letter posted the following day tempered her initial criticisms of Noheimer's illustrations, acknowledging 'as I go over them I see how he must have put his whole heart into trying to get the spirit of the essays. I think it is a very difficult thing to do, and only two artists ever really pleased my husband who illustrated his work and these were Robert Gibbings and Lynd Ward — and there were pictures of theirs he did not care for. He could not bear the illustrations in *The Book of Days* — a book as you know which was so fabulously expensive.'⁶²

Siberell shared with Trovillion that he had received 'four letters from Miss Gregory in the past week offering apologies for being so severe with us.'⁶³ Writing to Rex Hunter, he commented: 'If one can judge from her letters she is taking Llewelyn's death very bravely. Of course most of our letters have been about the book and the war. She writes very interesting and long letters. She is a very capable woman it seems to me. Says she is only a field away from the coast there at Chydyock [*sic*] and that they are expecting a thrust from the barbarians from the north very soon. She is at a loss as to what disposition to make of L's books and other valuable papers until the storm blows over.'⁶⁴ Siberell assured Alyse that he would protect her interests in the publication of *A Baker's Dozen* and smoothed over a small contretemps caused by Trovillion's advertisement of the American edition in England and the selling of a few copies through the offices of Kenneth Hopkins. He also addressed his own error in the Alice-Alyce-Alyse spelling affair and offered his services as a repository for Alyse's papers and books, noting that Hopkins had sent to him copies of all his poetry for the duration of the war. Alyse replied that she had made arrangements for the protection of Llewelyn's papers and had designated British and American literary executors. With regard to her previous criticism, she noted she liked 'people to stand their own ground, but I also like to drop a grain of sand now and then into a machine that seems to be running away too fast.' She also informed him that 'I have left to you my husband's special editions of his books, that is the ones bound especially for him.'⁶⁵ In September she wrote a stunning account of life at Chydyok in wartime Dorset:

Our house rattles and shakes at night with the guns. The milkman who takes the milk from the village had the roof of his house blown out and he and all his family were blown out of the window naked into the night and yet all survived *unhurt*. We have seen the planes come down in flames and have frequent battles over our heads, but never imagine that there is any weakening in the will of this nation. Never did they stand more firmly, in spite of sleepless nights, the sirens forever giving their dreadful wails. It is a sturdy and pugnacious nation *with no fear in its heart* and only complete annihilation will ever conquer it. We stand on our terrace at night and see the heavens one vast arena of revolving lights and sometimes chains of fires all along the horizon for the Germans are going about dropping incendiary bombs on the corn stacks and

hayricks, and each morning that we wake once more into the light seems like a miracle. At present we are more nervous of a bull in the next field to us than of the bombs. Everybody here hopes that Roosevelt will be re-elected. I do hope *A Baker's Dozen* is having some success. I am more than ever confident that my husband's writing will survive this generation if the generation itself survives.⁶⁶

Critical response to the publication was limited. A much deferred review in 1942 by Edward Larocque Tinker in the *New York Times Book Review* praised Siberell's introduction and the 'comprehensive cross-section of the work of this modern writer who has reached back into the past for his poised quality of expression and his intuitive reasoning' possessing a style 'clear, untrammelled by conventional limitations, colorful and illusive.'⁶⁷ Benjamin de Casseres, major critic for the Hearst newspapers, declined to review *A Baker's Dozen* even though pressed by Siberell to do so. 'Ben de Casseres,' Siberell wrote to Trovillion, 'says that Llewelyn Powys' book is too pot-boilerish not worthy of Llewelyn and that since it is not up to L's usual standard he'll not say a word about it. Isn't that an odd stand? I'm dreadfully sorry about this but I tried every way possible to induce him to mention it in his column. He promised me that he would, but after seeing it changed his mind. Had he mentioned it it would have appeared in every Hearst paper. But he is adamant. Says to publicize this book would do L. more harm than good. I disagree with him heartily.'⁶⁸ By 1948, over 350 of the 500 copies of *A Baker's Dozen* had been distributed for review or purchase with Alyse receiving 50% of the net profits. Initially priced at \$3.00, the signed editions were priced at \$6.00 by 1948.

Before his death, Llewelyn had suggested that he would approach his English publishers and propose an edition of *A Baker's Dozen* utilizing Siberell's introduction and Noheimer's illustrations if he were pleased with them. Alyse moved forward with plans for an English edition. John Cowper reported to Siberell that The Bodley Head had agreed to 'bring out an edition of Trovillion's and your *Baker's Dozen* only they insist on it having a family illustrator and a family introduction —, so my sister Gertrude hopes to help out with the pictures & Brother John (tho' I shan't *either steal from, or to try to rival* or compete with, my esteemed friend's Introduction) is to rattle off a brief foreword.'⁶⁹

Siberell graciously agreed that it was wise for The Bodley Head 'to enhance the book with Powys flowers rather than two unknown Americans. It will tend to distinguish both editions. It pleases me very much to share the honors with our esteemed and venerable friend.'⁷⁰ Upon receipt of the English edition, he sent a letter to John Cowper, praising his introduction as 'a splendid piece of writing and O, how it eclipses my introduction to the American edition. Fine work, and I am happy to add this choice morsel from your esteemed pen to my Powys archives. It was a worthy tribute to your good brother's work. Your sister's illustrations are well in keeping with the text. Some of them I like better than Noheimer's, others are not as good, but all in all they are very special.'⁷¹

Siberell had been corresponding with Louis Wilkinson since 1935 and together with Llewelyn they had enjoyed the joke that Siberell was 'Cornelia — Keeper of the Powys Jewels', with reference to the Roman matron. At the time of Llewelyn's death, Siberell wrote to Wilkinson that it 'suddenly occurred to me that you perhaps more than anyone in the World save J.C.P and A.G. would miss good old L. I suddenly remembered that he had been a life-long friend of yours, and a tried and true friend too, no doubt. Real friends are certainly rare in these days and they are certainly something to be appreciated.'⁷² Wilkinson responded with kind words for Siberell's contribution to *A Baker's Dozen*: 'Needless to say, I read your Introduction very

appreciatively. It seems to me an unusually discriminating and enlightening piece of work, and, as one who has known both L.I.P and his writings for so long, and for so long has loved them both, I want personally to thank you.⁷³

Wilkinson had planned a long delayed return to the United States in the Fall of 1939. Siberell made tentative arrangements for him to lecture at Southern State Teachers College in Carbondale, Illinois near Herrin where he and Wilkinson were to visit the Trovillions. In order to assist with travel expenses, additional lecture bookings were proposed as well as suggestions of periodicals which might accept contributions from Wilkinson. Plans were scuttled by events in Europe. 'A letter to me from Wilkinson,' Siberell wrote to Trovillion, 'states that he has cancelled his American trip for the time being as he did not wish to be cut off by the war from his son and daughter and others dear to him. So the lectures are all off, for which I am very sorry. Hope it has not inconvenienced you too much.'⁷⁴

In the 1940s Siberell made plans for another significant Powys publication, a limited edition of *Glory of Life*. In April 1942 he became a founding member and secretary of the Cincinnati Book Club which later took the name 'Society of Bibliosophers'. The eight members established the club for the purpose of 'good fellowship and the exchange of ideas, and to publish an occasional book of interest to collectors and booklovers.'⁷⁵ Siberell urged that the Society publish a limited edition of Llewelyn's *Glory of Life* which he considered one of the 'wonder books' of his generation. He contacted Lynd Ward, illustrator of *Impassioned Clay* and *Now That the Gods Are Dead*, proposing that he provide the frontispiece. Ward responded that he had already thought about publishing an edition of this same title. He offered to provide a number of wood engravings in exchange for 300 sets of the printed pages which he would then distribute as a selection of a planned print and book club of his own.

After initial coolness to Siberell's proposal, Alyse responded that the involvement of Ward in the project convinced her of its efficacy. 'You will already have received my letter saying that I would prefer to withhold the publication of this book for the present. However, my husband had so much admiration for Lynd Ward's wood engravings and felt for him so warm a friendship that it would be a pleasure to me to think of his having a hand in another book of my husband's.'⁷⁶ She asked that the text be based on the John Lane edition of 1938 rather than the Golden Cockerel Press edition of 1934 because of slight changes which Llewelyn had made for the Lane edition. It is interesting that there is no reference in the correspondence alluding to Siberell's possession of the original manuscript of *Glory of Life* which Llewelyn had sent to him in 1939. There is some possibility that Siberell may have felt his ownership of the manuscript could have been contested. Llewelyn had originally written, somewhat ambiguously, that 'the original manuscript of the *Glory of Life* is at the Golden Cockerel Press and if you know of a "rich" collector I will part with it for \$200 or £40. I believe it is a script that will increase very much in value after my death — but I would never consent to sell it to you at this price!'⁷⁷ Siberell responded that he knew 'a collector, a very rich collector here who might by chance be interested in paying \$200.00 for the m.s. of "Glory of Life". I'll make him a proposition but I don't want to appear too anxious. Maybe I could get more for it. I'd certainly buy it myself if I had the ready cash. It is one of the wonder books of my reading experience.'⁷⁸ Llewelyn answered that he would 'send *Glory of Life* in manuscript as soon as I can get hold of it — but you must not feel under the least obligation.'⁷⁹ The transcribed letters provided by Siberell for Alyse when she collected Llewelyn's correspondence for publication, omitted this final reference — the only notable omission in the transcriptions from the originals. In any event the manuscript was in Siberell's possession and was eventually sold as part of his Powys collection.



Llewelyn Powys at Chydyok, 1937 (photo taken by Horace E. Randerson. Courtesy of Melvon Ankeny)

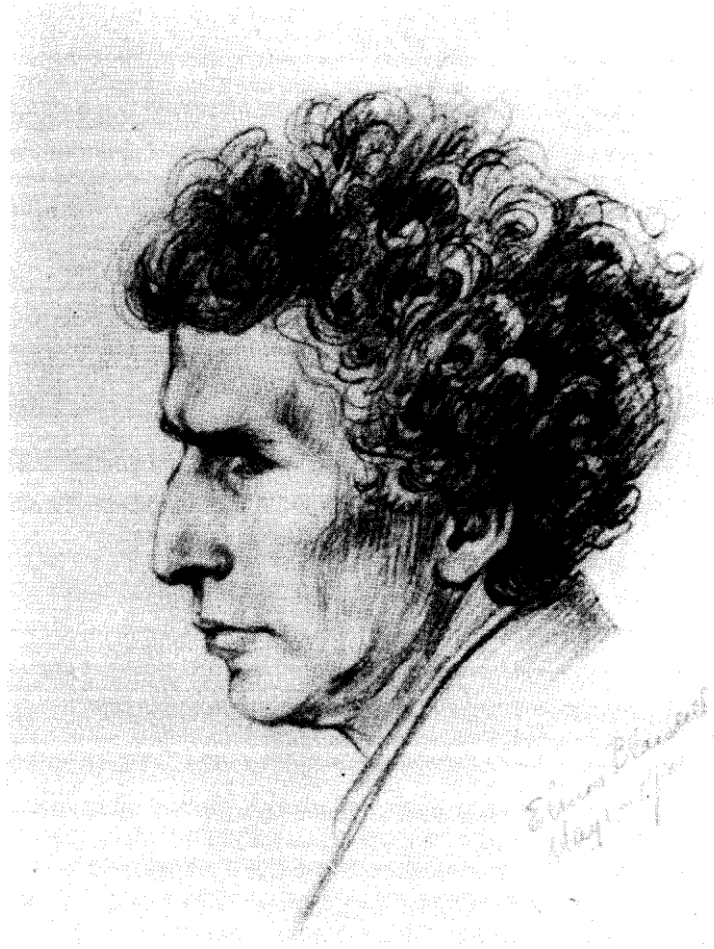
By January 1945 Siberell proposed and Alyse accepted a plan for a limited edition of 600 copies of *Glory of Life*. The forthcoming publication was announced in Malcolm Elwin's *The Life of Llewelyn Powys*: 'In America The Society of Bibliosophers, Cincinnati, Ohio, have announced for publication in 1945 or 1946 an edition of *Glory of Life*, with twelve wood engravings by Lynd Ward.'⁸⁰ Siberell notified Ward that Elmer Gleason of the Stratford Press in Cincinnati was awaiting his illustrations. 'Elaborate dummies for GLORY OF LIFE are well on the way to completion ... Elmer wants to get out a prospectus for the book about which both of us are very enthusiastic. I would therefore like to get some idea from you as to about when your wood engravings will be completed. I also had a recent letter from Alyse Gregory wondering what we were doing about the book.'⁸¹ Such correspondence with Ward filled with prodding from Siberell continued for more than a decade. Six years later, in 1952, still planning and hoping, with the number of projected woodcuts now reduced from twelve to nine, Siberell reported to a friend that he had 'the original handwritten manuscript of GLORY OF LIFE given to me by the author. Elmer Gleason of The Stratford Press, Cincinnati and I have planned for several years to publish a fine American edition of it... but Lynd is far behind with his work and has not finished the engravings for it. We still hope to publish it one day.'⁸² Three years later, Alyse lamented the fact that the

woodcuts were not completed and had reached an agreement with Ward 'that if the illustrations of the *Glory of Life* had not been completed during this coming year we were to make other arrangements.'⁸³ As late as 1957, Siberell was still asking Ward if he would 'ever consider further work on the wood engravings for Llewelyn Powys' *GLORY OF LIFE*, which Elmer Gleason was to print? I know you are a very busy man but Gleason is getting old.'⁸⁴ And the project ended there.

In many ways Siberell looked upon himself as the American representative of the Powys brothers, solicitous of their interests, alerting them to reprints of articles, anxious to promote their writings, and willing to perform missions for them. Illustrative of such tasks was his search for the whereabouts of a portrait painted of Llewelyn in 1923 by the New York artist, Jerry Blum. Llewelyn expressed interest in finding the portrait 'especially as E. L. Kirchner — the German exponent of modern art who committed suicide last year has left a remarkable picture of me but one I personally do not appreciate at all — being too idealistic — a kind of studio project with two birds at my feet.'⁸⁵ When contacted by Siberell, the artist's wife (Blum was currently ill in hospital) was able to locate the unfinished sketch of Llewelyn on the reverse side of a landscape in possession of a third party. She also wrote to Llewelyn informing him of two 'very fine' and 'finished' drawings of him by Blum but prices quoted were unacceptable to Llewelyn (as well as to Siberell when he made a later purchase query for the unfinished sketch.)⁸⁶

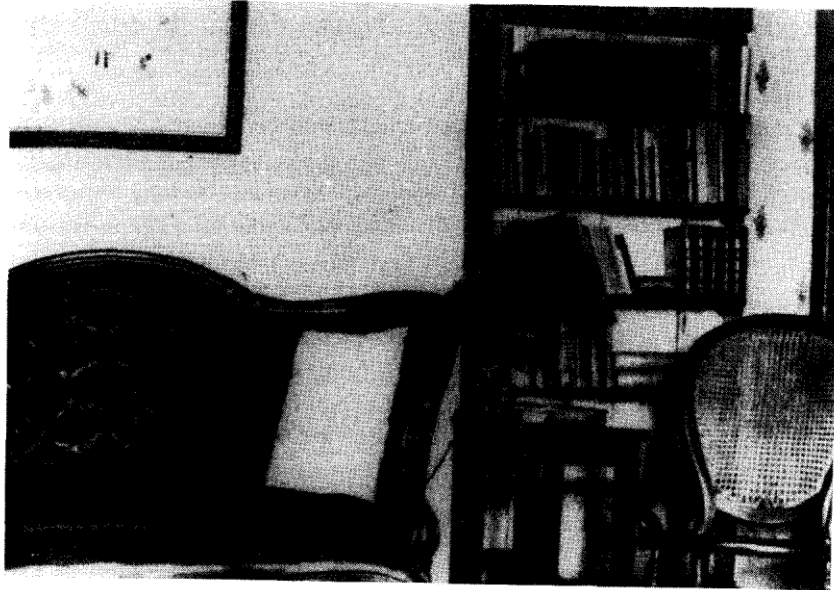
Siberell's network of Powys correspondents increased through introductions from John Cowper and Llewelyn. He also initiated his own correspondence when he discovered a new disciple of or connection to the Powys family. Typical of this was his correspondence with Alan Devoe, the nature writer and purchaser of Phudd Bottom, and with Ferner Nuhn, writer, occasional portrait artist of literary friends, and husband of writer Ruth Suckow. Nuhn had written a letter of praise on the occasion of John's departure which was published in the *New York Herald Tribune* on 3 June 1934 — and Siberell began a correspondence with him. He also added a photograph of Nuhn's portrait of John Cowper to his Powys archives. This 'psychological portrait' of a rather demented John Cowper with skeletal hands and face looming up in front of a 'Stonehenge' background had been rejected by Simon and Schuster as the frontispiece to *Autobiography* on the grounds that it lacked 'dignity'. The portrait joined a copy of a pencil sketch of John Cowper (see page 33) by the illustrator, Elinore Blaisdell (wife of New York City bookman and publisher's representative, Melrich von Rosenberg), which Siberell had obtained in one of his visits to New York City.

After the failure of *The Outrider* in 1934, Siberell was encouraged to begin a journal of his own, taking as his inspiration the one-man journal, *All's Well*, published by his friend, Charles J. Finger in Fayetteville, Arkansas. The result was *Imprimatur*, 'a privately circulated sporadic periodical' subtitled 'A folio of personalities, impressions and observations; an adventure in expression'. He published ten issues in all of four to eight pages, October 1941 — Autumn 1945. The first four issues were printed by a commercial printer. Then Siberell's life-long fascination with paper and fine printing as well as friendships with a number of excellent printers, led him to issue 'special keepsake numbers' printed in 'fine typographic style' by such printers as Elmer Gleason of The Stratford Press, Cincinnati; Norman Forgue of the Norman Press, Chicago; and the Journalism Laboratory Press of the Washington and Lee University, Lexington, Virginia. This experiment was interrupted by labour shortages caused by World War II and the final three issues were again printed by a commercial printer. *Imprimatur*, published 'every once in a while by The Auburncrest Library' (so named after Siberell's new residence on Mt Auburn in Cincinnati) was used to communicate Powys related news, anecdotes, and to facilitate Siberell's collecting, selling and trading of items with his network of correspondents,



Elinore Blaisdell's sketch of John Cowper Powys, May 1931. 'Mr Rosenberg & Mrs Rosenberg [Elinore Blaisdell] came & she made a sketch but it is a bit hard to recognise although a pretty picture and very artistic.' (Powys's Diary, 1 May 1931)

friends, fellow collectors, and private presses. The inaugural issue included a feature on Mathias Noheimer; entries on such Powys friends as Rex Hunter, Kenneth Hopkins, and Reginald Marsh; an announcement that *Imprimatur* would like to find some private press that would publish *Dayspring*, a monumental prose idyll (novelette) by Dr. Walter E. Schott ... with an eloquent introduction by John Cowper Powys; and a listing of a number of 'Powys' items for sale or trade.⁸⁷ Later issues contained such items as 'Hardhack and Phudd' with news of Alan Devoe (nature writer and owner of Phudd Bottom) and the poet Arthur Davison Ficke, John Cowper's nearby neighbour. Siberell's 'chance' encounter with Edgar Lee Masters in 1933 on the eve of his first visit to John resulted in Masters's submission of a poem, "Veterans of the Wars" to *The Outrider* in 1934 and an article on Masters in the Spring 1943 issue of *Imprimatur*. Siberell fondly recalled that it had 'been many a moon since that crisp summer evening when I walked across a fragrant wind-swept meadow near the hamlet of Hillsdale, New York, and met Edgar Lee Masters in the twilight hours ...'⁸⁸



A corner of the interior of Phudd Bottom, from a photograph taken in c. 1933 by Alan Devoe, the successor to Powys at Hillsdale. It shows Powys's horsehair couch and bookcase, 'all being his furnishings'. (Courtesy of Elise Fullerton via Melvon Ankeny)

Publication of *Imprimatur* was suspended with the Autumn 1945 issue. Siberell defended his publication against complaints about the infrequency of issues: 'From the beginning it was not intended as a regular periodical. It is issued at intervals that fit in with other activities on our very full schedule. It might be here stated that *Imprimatur* does not by any means pay its own way. Those who are not satisfied with the manner in which it is issued please ask for your subscription price back if you are not happy about it all.'⁸⁹ Discontented patrons who had entered 'Voluntary subscriptions' could presumably ask for a refund of their '\$1.00 for a baker's dozen.'

After Llewelyn's death, Siberell continued to correspond with a network of Powys family and friends both in England and America. Correspondents included Marian Powys, Arthur Davison Ficke, Rex Hunter, and Boyne Grainger among others in the United States and Louis Wilkinson, Kenneth Hopkins, Gilbert Turner, Alyse Gregory, and John Cowper in England. His list would eventually include Francis Powys and even his small son John Francis Cowper Powys, with whom he shared an interest in locomotives. In a letter to a friend, Siberell expressed his fundamental regard for the value of letters both as a correspondent and a collector: 'I have always carried on a great many exchanges of letters and have bales of them that may someday (when these writers arrive) be worth a small fortune. Even if they are not worth the paper they are written on I'll still like them. Letter writing is a favorite dish of mine ..'⁹⁰

Correspondence with John Cowper was most extensive in the early years of their acquaintance. Among the numerous topics discussed was Siberell's announced intention of writing an historical novel set in Ohio with references to the mound builders and the Scioto Valley. John was very encouraging and admitted that sometimes he 'thought of trying my hand myself at the Historical Novel', but he was very perceptive in noting 'I often think that you have a singular destiny in standing—like Aaron—between the *living* and the *writing*.'⁹¹ True to John's

augury, Siberell's major literary contributions were as compiler of bibliographic check lists and facilitator of publications for others as publisher, editor, critic, or agent. John professed amazement at Siberell's youth, exclaiming 'But Siberell my friend I had *no idea* you were so young. I am amazed & can hardly credit it! How terrifyingly mature for your age you are! More than anyone I've ever met man or woman. When I first saw you you looked 35 & that was about six years ago now or more isn't it? Whereas you weren't nearly out of your twenties!'⁹²

The early letters of advice to the young disciple concerning his writing and problems in his personal life (Siberell's divorce) soon changed to businesslike correspondence between collector and author. In response to a letter from Alyse expressing concern for John Cowper's deteriorating eyesight and the need to reduce his correspondence demands, Siberell curtailed his communication but he could not resist a lengthy commiseration.

Some months ago Miss Gregory informed me that you wished to reduce your correspondence to a minimum so I have deliberately deferred writing to you on that account. I can well appreciate what a burden too much correspondence can become when it continues to increase for as we say, I am in the same boat as you. I could not possibly reply to all the letters I receive so have to be discriminating and let some of them slide. As it is I generally write in the neighborhood of twenty-five letters per week. As you will see by the attached slip I am with the army and am forced to spend eight hours per day, six days per week on the dratted war effort. Consequently I must apportion my spare time to cover a multitude of interests. In addition to editing *Imprimatur*, I do a little writing, read considerably, the books I like, act as literary agent for some of my friends, do some trafficking [*sic*] in books and many other things.

Siberell also shared the news concerning a recent acquisition for what he now called the 'Powys archives'. 'I must tell you first of all that I recently acquired through a New York auction house the original holograph manuscript of WOLF SOLENT which I understand you sold around 1930 for enough to buy your Phudd farm. It is enclosed in two huge slip cases and contains a letter written by Miss Playter to the recipient. I cannot tell you how proud I am to add this choice item to my Powys archives.'⁹³

In 1942 Siberell had been drawn into closer involvement with the war effort. He wrote Trovillion that 'Uncle Sam has commandeered my services as Chief of Transportation and Property (civilian status so far) in the new sub office of the Cincinnati Ordnance District, War Department.'⁹⁴ He was transferred later the same year to the Transportation Corps. In October 1945, following the end of the war, he returned to his work at the Norfolk and Western Railroad and almost immediately received a promotion/transfer to a position in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. While based in North Carolina, he was engaged in several on-going literary projects. In September 1945 Norman Forgue had revived *The Book Collector's Packet* yet again. Siberell was named Editor-in-Chief for this third resuscitation which after ten issues expired for the final time in 1946. He used his position to continue publicizing the Powys cause and wrote to Wilkinson: 'I have taken up the editing of a monthly magazine called THE BOOK COLLECTOR'S PACKET. Under separate cover I am sending you a copy ... which carries an article about the Powys family by Gilbert E. Govan, Librarian at the University of Chattanooga ... On the q.t. I did offer J.C.P. a small sum of money to do us an article if he sees fit. This, of course, I will pay out of my own pocket just to help him get along. I think he could do us a fine article. Will you please let him see your copy of the PACKET?'⁹⁵

Following the final demise of *The Book Collector's Packet*, Siberell turned to the publication of a new incarnation of *Imprimatur*, previously 'a privately circulated affair'. He announced that 'IMPRIMATUR, a new literary publication for bibliophiles, will be launched January 1, 1947 and henceforth will be published quarterly' The extensive notice in *Publishers' Weekly* listed Siberell as editor and publisher, Lawrence S. Thompson and L. M. Wilson as associate editors, Dan Burne Jones as art editor, Lynd Ward as art adviser, and a wide-ranging schedule of articles, features, and bibliographies. 'For the most part it will be devoted to the whys, wherefores and amenities of book collecting.'⁹⁶ *Imprimatur* in its expanded 32-page format was again used to communicate Powys related news but ceased after only three issues (Volume I, Number 1, January 1947 and a combined issue of Numbers 2-3, April-July 1947.) Writing to his son, Siberell later explained the 'publication was ended because I didn't get enough subscriptions. I lost probably \$1000 on the project.'⁹⁷

Siberell also had several other Powys-related projects in process which he described to Hal Trowvillion. 'Did I tell you that Louis Wilkinson sent me the forty page manuscript of his paper about THE BROTHERS POWYS which he read last winter before The Royal Society of Literature in London. I'm trying to find someone to publish it, and as a last resort I may publish it myself if I can find a suitable printer reasonably. It's a splendid piece of writing. Also I have his piece about T. F. Powys which he read over the British Broadcasting Corporation at Bristol, England. I may publish that too. Another book that I have on deck is Reginald Hunter's poems with my introduction. I'd like to get all these in print before next spring.'⁹⁸

Siberell was successful in publishing *The Brothers Powys* and pleased with his ingenuity in the face of wartime paper shortages. He boasted to a friend:

The Powys opus [was printed] in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, the largest tobacco manufacturing town in the world. And believe it or not, Mr. Ripley, it is printed on cigarette paper manufactured in close proximity to the world's tobacco capital. Remember Camels? The paper is Ecusta Flax made by Ecusta Paper Company, Pisgah Forest, North Carolina. For many years cigarette paper was all imported from France but now it's being produced right here in the United States, thanks to the ingenuity of our own paper industry. This small brochure was an experiment to ascertain whether this wafer thin paper was opaque enough to stand printing on both sides without showing through too much. I think it is a pretty fair job considering that it was done by a country printer whom I stood over for months. A lot of experimentation with ink and impressions went into the production of this pamphlet.'⁹⁹

Nearly half a century later, the pamphlet remains as uniquely attractive an example of printing as it must have been on the day of issue. *The Brothers Powys* was published under the imprint of The Auburncrest Library in 1947 after Siberell was transferred back to Cincinnati. The announcement of publication in the revived *Imprimatur* was in true 'Extravagantic' style. Titled 'GOOD NEWS FOR BIBLIOPHILES', it asked:

Did you ever hear of the illustrious trio of Welsh-English writers: Llewelyn, Theodore Francis, and John Cowper Powys — the most unique, perhaps the greatest, trinity of writing brothers the literary world has ever known? You don't know what culture is unless you have read *The Meaning of Culture* by John Cowper Powys; and you haven't learned to appreciate solitude until you've read his *A Philosophy of Solitude*. You

haven't learned to live unless you have read *Glory of Life, Impassioned Clay* and *Love and Death* by Llewelyn Powys. And have you read that "wonder book of the decade" *Mr. Weston's Good Wine* by T. F. Powys? Louis Umfreville Wilkinson has analysed the writings of these three literary titans in his monumental paper *The Brothers Powys* delivered before the Royal Society of Literature in London, England. That great essay will soon be published in brochure form and may be ordered from Lloyd Emerson Siberell, P. O. Box 322, Winston-Salem 1, North Carolina. Price \$1.50 postpaid.¹⁰⁰

Siberell continued to involve himself in a number of projects related to John Cowper; some of a literary nature, others related to his concern for John's health and financial condition. A proposed anthology of selections from John Cowper's writings to be published by Simon & Schuster never materialized. Siberell had been contacted as 'the authority' on Powys and had replied that 'I shall be willing to lend a helping hand wherever possible. Also I would be willing to write an introduction to such a book if you are interested.'¹⁰¹ Whether this was indeed an invitation for 'collaboration' as he characterized it or a simple request for 'assistance', Siberell was eager to offer his help. He solicited John's approval of his involvement and could report to Alyse that 'J. C. P says I'm just the man for "thik little job."¹⁰²

When Arthur Davison Ficke wrote him that funds were being collected to provide an anonymous five pounds per week stipend to aid John Cowper, Siberell was quick to respond. Writing to Gilbert Turner in England, he asked if he had 'heard that J. D. Beresford and Cris Massie are soliciting friends and acquaintances of J. C. Powys in an endeavor to build up a fund to help JCP out of his present straits. I understand Theodore Dreiser is the chairman for U.S.A. None of them have as yet contacted me. Do you know the addresses of Beresford and Massie. I'd like to get in touch with them about this matter. Unless Powys already knows about this I'd advise you to treat it with strictest confidence as far as he is concerned. I never knew but that he was able to make his own way. What a shame for a man who has been so generous with his works and money to come to this sort of a predicament.'¹⁰³ Turner replied that he 'hadn't previously heard of this scheme ... but soon after receiving your letter, J.C.P in a letter to me referred to "having been freed, through angelic intervention of all money worries for nearly two years", so I imagine the scheme to be already in operation.'¹⁰⁴ [Richard Graves in *The Brothers Powys* relates that John Cowper did indeed receive financial aid in April of 1944 but it was in the form of a grant from the Royal Literary Fund.]¹⁰⁵

Forever determined to enrich his Powys archives and perhaps thinking that John's financial straits might create an acquisition opportunity, Siberell wrote to him:

Considering that I might consistently, but with trepidations, approach you as an astute and hard-shelled American business man as well as a friend and a brother of the literati, the thought has often struck me that you might have many of your own printed works and innumerable manuscripts that you would care to part with at a price. If you could rig me up a list of such items as you would like to dispose of, such as books manuscripts and letters I would be willing to either buy them from you or try to sell them to such Powys followers and bibliomaniacs as I have contact with over here.¹⁰⁶

There was no response to this inquiry but Siberell again asked in 1948 if John had 'any holograph manuscripts of your books and articles which you would like to sell. If you do, please advise me and let me know how much you ask for them. I am not "flushed with money" so to speak — as

they say in the typical American vernacular; but since I am (as far as I know) the greatest collector of Powyseana in America, and perhaps the world, I would like to have first bid on some of your work because I have confidence that you will go down to posterity as one of the greatest — if not the great — English novelist.'¹⁰⁷ John responded that he would provide a list of items for sale. 'Sure you shall *have news* of what *Manuscripts* I can scabble up from the more immediate crannies & cracks & chasms — of my cave-man abode! Do you know I've had to look up in the Oxford Dictionary your technical word *holograph* ...'¹⁰⁸ And after some months revisited the topic: 'And now *To Business*, my dear friend! You asked about Long Hand MSS of mine & their price. Save the one you already have of wh you've spoken i.e. Wolf Solent I have not sold any of my manuscripts to a soul. And I do think that as our bibliographer and editor & collector & one of our oldest friends you ought to be the one for me to make a start with in "thik little job", as Llewelyn wd say, of selling manuscripts!'¹⁰⁹

Siberell's collection in large part was created by purchasing books at the time of issue, trading items with other collectors, gifts, and selective buying from bookdealers. The prices quoted by John Cowper were well beyond Siberell's financial means and they were unable to reach any purchase agreement. He answered John's letter:

Some time back, you quoted me prices on some of the complete original "holograph" or longhand manuscripts of your works, viz: MORTAL STRIFE and THE ART OF GROWING OLD at 100 pounds sterling each. At the old standard of exchange that would amount to nearly \$500.00, or at the present rate of exchange about \$300.00. While I feel that one day they may be worth that much or more I don't feel that in my present financial circumstances I could afford to pay that kind of money for them. With economic and world conditions as they are, even if I had the capital, I could not afford to invest it in literary manuscripts and take the chance because I have no place to keep them safely. Doesn't this all sound rather mercenary! Do you mind my being perfectly frank and matter-of-fact in these matters? After all, how can one set a price in dollars or pounds on such elusive products. In the boom war year of 1943 I purchased the original 1800-page "long-hand" manuscript of WOLF SOLENT for \$110.00 on the open competitive market... Please do not think that I am presuming to set prices on your manuscripts; it is just that my means are limited and I must watch my p's and q's even though I would love to add some more of your manuscripts to my extensive Powys collection which I shall never sell as long as I live and most likely will give to some worthy and deserving library or museum one day.¹¹⁰

Siberell's acquisition instincts had previously led him to such attempts as an unsuccessful solicitation of Lisaly Gujer, Llewelyn's friend and nurse in Davos Platz for 'letters, manuscripts and private papers or books' she might have in trade for a copy of *A Baker's Dozen* which she had requested.¹¹¹ Siberell never had a great deal of money for Powys Archive purchases, and he had obtained the manuscript of *Wolf Solent*, his most prized acquisition, for a very small price. He once lamented that he had 'just received a catalog from an English bookseller listing dozens of Llewelyn Powys manuscripts, all for sale as a lot at 2750 pounds, or \$7700. It made me heartsick to think that I could not afford to put out that much money. Such is the life of the collector.'¹¹²

John Cowper had long ago responded positively to Siberell's request for inscribed copies of his books. 'Of course! any book of mine you ever send me, for that purpose, will I write my

name on — with pride & gratitude & pleasure. *John* for earthy solidity — *Cowper* for neurotic differings and diffidences & debouchings (for escape) into classical retreats, such as in reality would bowl me out terribly quick, *were I there* — along with that wily Odysseus — along with that rushing Achilles! and *Powys* for far-drawn pride!¹¹³ Siberell continued to take advantage of this opportunity to increase the value and importance of the editions in his collection and John continued to oblige. '*Surely!* I'd be proud to inscribe some of those books you have in your collection ... *don't send anything* in the way of cash or food unless it were *Sugar!* *Sugar* I do have a very great "penchant" amounting, as Elia wd say, to a "tendresse" for & never seem to satisfy my Dragon's Maw in this commodity!¹¹⁴ 'Yes I sure will not forget your wish that I should mention some historical fact (or at least some dramatic or atmospheric fact) in connection with the particular volume.'¹¹⁵

Siberell's efforts to provide comfort and support to John were not limited to the collecting and publishing arena. Aware of his serious struggles with a stomach ulcer and learning via Rex Hunter that a promising new treatment had been discovered, Siberell contacted Mead Johnson, manufacturers of a pre-digested protein called Amigen. In March 1946, they informed him that the supply was currently very limited but that a similar product — Protolysate — would soon be available. Siberell arranged for a supply of Protolysate to be dispatched to John Cowper and received John's report from Rex Hunter that 'Phyllis will safe guard & keep safe most carefully in her secretest medicine chest this *recovery-cure* for ulcer dyspeptic hurtings — of that Chinese physician you met & wh. that most generous of Mutual Publishers of ours the Incomparable Siberell has already despatched to me.'¹¹⁶ It is doubtful that John ever tried the medication. He had already written Hunter that his gastric health was 'really and truly *Better* — more by my own following of the doctrines of Hippocrates as interpreted by Galen and of Galen as interpreted by Rabelais than by the aid of Modern Science!' ¹¹⁷

Elise Fullerton, a friend and fellow Powys enthusiast, suggested to Siberell that John Cowper might make recordings of his works for sale. He moved forward with the idea, writing to Gilbert Turner among others:

The thought has occurred to me that since John Cowper Powys is now blind in one eye and his sight is failing in the other, handicapping him insofar as writing is concerned, that perhaps he could dictate much of his work from here on and it might be recorded. There must be recording companies in England who would be interested in recording his thoughts and observations and selling them to his many followers throughout the world. Such a project would no doubt net him some much needed cash and would also reflect a profit to the recording company. It would be a shame if those who have never heard him on the lecture platform should miss the thrill of hearing his voice again. It would be like missing the speeches of your Winston Churchill and our Franklin Roosevelt. If you know of any connections that you may have who has contact with a recording company, let me know. I am convinced that such recordings could be sold at from \$10.00 to \$25.00 to certain ardent fans of J.C.P in America. I think I could sell at least 50 of these recordings in the U.S.A. at from 10 to 25 dollars.¹¹⁸

His suggestion met with negative response from all of the Powys contacts he consulted. Louis Wilkinson's response was typical:

If it were a case of someone with a different and a more usual temperament I should

think the idea an excellent one, but J.C.P. being as he is, I am afraid he would be quite sure not to accept it. Miss Gregory feels as I do — that he would not consider it for a moment. I did my best to get him to consent to broadcast in the programme dealing with Llewelyn P. that the British Broadcasting Corporation put on a little while ago. I thought that he might possibly do it as his brother was the subject, but he was adamant. All such "mechanical devices" he detests, and it would, I know, be exactly the same with dictation to a recording company.¹¹⁹

Siberell reported to Fullerton that 'After receipt of your good letter of March 4, 1952, I wrote several influential friends of John Cowper Powys in Great Britain about your idea of his recording his works and voice, which I thought was excellent. JCP absolutely refuses to appear before any of these abominable contraptions which go with recordings. He never would speak before a microphone or loud speaker either in public or private and you, who have read him, will no doubt understand why. He was born a hundred years too late.'¹²⁰

In 1951 John Cowper had written asking that Siberell endorse Derek Langridge's work on his remarkable bibliographic publication, *John Cowper Powys: A Record of Achievement*. [Library Association, London, 1966] 'You should send him your blessing,' John proposed, '... if not a copy of yours wh of course nothing wd make me *ever lend* to a soul!' ¹²¹ Siberell offered Langridge his help and advice. 'I have no ambition about ever doing any more authoritative bibliographical work on the brothers Powys. If you want to continue I shall help you unselfishly. What I don't want to miss is any Powys item for my collection. If I were you, I would not put out a definitive bibliography of JCP's work so long as he continues to write.'¹²²

Siberell had long abandoned his own plans for a book on the Powys brothers which he once had hopes of writing. In a 1940 letter to William C. Deny, he had expanded on his methodology: 'I am in no hurry about my Powys book. I want all the information available on the subject before I finish it. I always keep several works in progress and go back and pick up the thread where I left off. This is my most effective way of working. I seldom lose enthusiasm for a thing I start no matter how long it takes me to finish it... My great trouble is having too many irons in the fire.'¹²³

Many of Siberell's 'irons' were never to be realized. He was unsuccessful in placing for publication *St George and Augustus*, a 'satiric allegory in rhyme' by Boyne Grainger, friend of Llewelyn and Kenneth Hopkins, as well as Walter Schott's *Dayspring*, a 'prose idyll on the birth of Christ' with a lengthy foreword by John Cowper. After a number of attempts, he failed to arrange for publication of any of the collections of Kenneth Hopkins's poetry which had been sent to him for safekeeping during the war. Norman Forgue of the Black Cat Press in Chicago was approached with the suggestion that he issue a small volume initially titled 'Blackbird's Song' with an introduction by Llewelyn; plans were announced for 'a small volume with an introduction by John Cowper Powys' to be 'published by Dave Webb at his Old Capitol Press in Chillicothe, in the Autumn'; and suggestions were floated to Elmer Gleason and Hal Trovillion that they publish collections.¹²⁴ All came to nothing.

Another unrealized project was a catalogue of his 'Auburncrest Powys collection' which Siberell planned to publish 'one day when I have the means, for the edification of those interested in the Powys family.' Alyse Gregory was asked to write 'an introduction for this volume a little later when it nears completion.'¹²⁵ Plans for a comprehensive exhibition of Powys materials at the University of Kentucky Library, proposed by his friend, Lawrence Thompson, Director of Libraries, simply faded away. Siberell wrote to a number of friends and members of the Powys

family including Alyse, Louis Wilkinson, Marian Powys Grey, and John Cowper regarding the proposed exhibition. 'I am wondering if there is any Powys material — inscribed books, manuscripts, letters, photographs, etc.— that you might send me for this exhibition. I would like to make it a cross-section of material by the entire Powys family, and while I have what I consider an extensive collection, any contribution would be welcome. Such a Powys exhibit, all points considered, should create widespread interest because of the publicity angle; and I believe it would be well worth the cooperation of all concerned. My thought is that you might perhaps have some interesting Powys ephemera that belongs in this show but might not be in my collection.'¹²⁶ Siberell failed to pursue the matter and there it ended. Due to an increasing press of business matters, he also cancelled his own appearance at the University of Kentucky Library where he was to repeat his speech, 'The Brothers Powys' (previously given before the Rowfant Club, Cleveland, Ohio on 14 March 1952).

But, all was not total failure for his Powys projects. He was successful in placing Rex Hunter's *Porlock: a Portrait* (Introduction by John Cowper Powys) with the Caxton Press in 1940 and he also went on to publish Hunter's book of poetry, *Call Out of Darkness*, in 1946 under his own imprint of The Auburncrest Library.

In 1953, Siberell embarked on his final Powys venture, the founding of the Anglo-American Powyseana Society. This was in response to his belief that the Powys family was much neglected in America and to his continuing transatlantic correspondence with Powys enthusiasts in England and elsewhere. He shared his plans with John Cowper. 'I don't know whether or not you have seen this letterhead before but my plans are to ultimately get all the Powys fans and enthusiasts together into a Society whereby they may become better acquainted with the Powys works and the unusual people who read and collect the works of the Powys family. I plan to publish a roster of all such people and disseminate it to all interested parties to further the Powys cause.'¹²⁷ — And what a letterhead it was! In many ways a symbolic testament to Siberell's belief in the Powys brothers and their family, and to his own determination to share his 'Extravagantic' vision:

John Cowper was less than enthusiastic about the news. He wrote to Trovillion asking:

Don't 'ee I beg you enter upon — O generous hearted and kind-hearted friend — any campaign or crusade on my behalf. Of course I can't speak for my brothers and sisters and I have heard from Siberell about his Powyseana Society so I do know what with all the good intentions in the world and with all his remarkable powers for carrying arduous and hard enterprises through Siberell is undertaking on behalf of the Powys Tribe. But it still remains, my dear H.T., that I have yielded in my old age so completely, yes! have yielded myself up so wholly and entirely—*body soul and the rest!* — to the life of a Recluse and a Hermit... It would be hard to — yes! hard for me to —feel the gratitude I dare say I ought normally and naturally in the struggle of life to feel for Siberell's kindly intentioned Powyseana society idea.¹²⁹

His response to Siberell was more oblique. 'No I had never seen this letter-head before and I do indeed thank you for letting me see it now. I must apologize for this scrawl but one of my eyes is totally blind and the other tends to go on strike only too quickly as the day darkens and lighting-up time arrives so I am not the voluble correspondent I once was! However! I do surely thank you very much for sending me this letter with this impressive letter-head.'¹³⁰

AAPS
The Anglo-American Powyseana Society

THE FABULOUS POWYS
FAMILY:
JOHN COWPER POWYS
THEODORE FRANCIS POWYS
LLEWELYN POWYS
ALBERT REGINALD POWYS
LITTLETON C. POWYS
PHILIPPA POWYS
GERTRUDE MARY POWYS
MARIAN POWYS
(Mrs. Peter Grey)
ALYSE GREGORY
(Mrs. Llewelyn Powys)
ELIZABETH MYERS
(Mrs. Littleton Powys)
LAURENCE POWYS

LLOYD EMERSON SIBERELL
Founder and International Secretary
P.O. Box 2004
Columbus 16, Ohio USA

[at the bottom of the page]

A Society dedicated to the dissemination of knowledge about and appreciation for the works of the Powys family, the most illustrious and creative family of artists and authors in modern times.¹²⁸

John Cowper's plea notwithstanding, Trovillion and Siberell had already proceeded to join forces in responding to an article in *John O'London's Weekly*. The article had stated 'that Dylan Thomas has done more to draw attention to Welsh literature than any dozen of contemporary Welsh writers put together.'¹³¹ Trovillion wrote 'this may be a prevailing opinion in England, but it is a rather extravagant statement to go unchallenged here in the States when one recalls the famous Powys family of writers and artists ... they are predominantly Welsh.' And Siberell contributed the quintessential 'Extravagantic' statements: 'Dylan Thomas may be famous in England, but who knows him in America and after all Americans are more "akin" to the Welsh than we are to the English. In canvassing John Cowper Powys followers in America and England and around the world, we find more people know the works of John Cowper Powys in America, where are the majority of real lovers of literature, than any other place in the world. We are not trying to take any credit from Dylan Thomas, but we think Wales should be proud of a great Welsh author that this person must have surely overlooked.' The editor responded, pointing out that 'over here John Cowper Powys is never regarded as a Welsh writer — and I am sure he himself would never claim to be one. Mr. Powys was born in Derbyshire and spent much of his life in Dorsetshire [later corrected by a reader's letter to Somerset] where his father held a living for many years. Dylan Thomas, incidentally, is now in the U.S.A. where he is on a lecture tour.'¹³² Siberell disagreed with *John O'London's* response. He wrote Trovillion 'I don't get their idea that JCP, who has written two purely Welsh novels, is not a Welsh author. I think these two

books could be great contributions to Welsh literature, but I never involve JCP in any controversy of this kind. He is touchy on any controversial subject. I learned better many years ago.' ¹³³

Writing to Lawrence Thompson, Siberell sketched out his ideas for the Society:

The Anglo-American Powyseana Society is more or less in the formative stage and not telling what tangents or other lines it may follow. So far, there are no tariffs, dues or demands ... For many years I've been urged to organize such a society and this letterhead is more or less of a feeler. Later, I plan to publish a roster of people around the world who are interested in the Powys works and perhaps put out a quarterly in which Powys followers will be urged to express themselves. I'll have to wait and see what reception it gets. All I expect, if it arouses the anticipated interest is printing and mailing expenses and if it is like most of my Powys projects, I'll lose my shirt but I like to try. Considering the circumstances, it sounds screwy for a hardboiled businessman such as I... to start such a project, but old Siberell is an adventuresome old goat. ¹³⁴

Siberell solicited the assistance of his network of correspondents and friends to provide him with additional names of prospective AAPS members. These included Francis Powys, T.F.'s son, who as proprietor of the Powys Bookshop in Hastings was 'hereby designated the official bookseller of The Anglo-American Powyseana Society.' Siberell was initially confused about Francis's identity as the poet, Laurence Powys. He had written to Francis asking 'What do you think of my idea of organizing an ANGLO-AMERICAN POWYSEANA SOCIETY to further the interest of the literary members of the Powys family including yourself and your poet brother Laurence?' ¹³⁵ Correcting his gaffe, he apologized, writing that he 'was delighted to learn that you are Laurence Powys. I admire the poetry that you used to write and hope you go back to the writing of poetry someday.' ¹³⁶ Francis offered to distribute the Society's leaflets to bookshop customers and told Siberell that T. F. Powys had approved of his plans, writing that his 'father very much liked the idea of the Society & we were talking about it not long before he died.' ¹³⁷

A mimeographed form letter was sent out addressed to:

Dear Powys student, enthusiast or collector:

Because of your known interest in art and literary works by and about the illustrious family of writing and artistic Powyses, we feel certain that you will want to affiliate yourself with the above organization [THE ANGLO-AMERICAN POWYSEANA SOCIETY] which is "dedicated to the dissemination of knowledge about and appreciation for the works of the Powys family." There is a nominal annual membership fee of \$2.00 assessed to cover cost of membership card, postage and mailing, and other incidental expenses. A membership roster will be distributed to members, and we hope to publish a quarterly bulletin carrying news about the membership and the Powys works. Dues start with the 81st birthday of John Cowper Powys, the eldest of the family, October 8, 1953. [signed] Sincerely yours, Lloyd Emerson Siberell, International Secretary. ¹³⁸

People responding to the initial letter received the response:

Dear Member:

Here is your membership card in The Anglo-American Powyseana Society of which we hope you will be proud, and since you have taken active cognizance of this movement it is hoped that you will diligently read the works of the Powys clan and go forward spreading the gospel expounded by this fabulous and miraculous family of writers and artists. Here is the creed adopted by the society: "Books that do not strengthen our difference from an author, books that do not strengthen our difference from all authors, books that do not strengthen our own unique and incommunicable philosophy do us as much harm as good, for every man who lives must sooner or later discover in the fatality of his own character as it is exposed to the shocks of chance, a peculiar line of endurance and enjoyment, which he must defend against all alien thought, sympathetic or otherwise, if he is to preserve his soul alive." — JOHN COWPER POWYS— Fraternally, [signed] Lloyd Emerson Siberell.¹³⁹

The 'creed' was taken from an inscription which John Cowper had written twenty-one years earlier in Siberell's copy of *The Meaning of Culture*: 'Written for Lloyd Emerson Siberell by John Cowper Powys August 17th 1932 — In answer to this request for an inscription made by an all too indulgent friend to my work I would like to implore him to remember that a writer's words however congenial to his own mood are pre-eminently a challenge against which it is necessary for him to fortify himself as well as a kindred appeal to what two separate minds have in common between them. [and then continuing with the text of the AAPS creed]' ¹⁴⁰

As part of a promotional campaign for the Society, Siberell wrote an article for *the Antiquarian Bookman*, 'COLLECTING THE POWYS FAMILY', describing his almost thirty years as a Powys collector.

In the late 1920's I started collecting works by and about members of the Powys family, which I consider the most unique and fabulous literary and artistic family group of the twentieth century, perhaps of all times. Without intending to boast, I believe I now have amassed one of the most unusual and extensive collections on this remarkable family extant. Today Powys literary enthusiasts the world around have become a cult. I do not consider myself a Powys cultist nor a "full fledged" authority on the works of the great Powys family, I am foremost, a collector of their works and admirer of their literary talents, but from all over the world for the past twenty years I have received letters from Powys enthusiasts, requesting information about the family.¹⁴¹

Announcements of the founding of AAPS were placed in other publications including the *Book Exchange*, London, and *The Amateur Book Collector*, Chicago, and Siberell advised Louis Wilkinson of the new enterprise:

Incidentally, I am organizing "The Anglo-American Powyseana Society" ... I think you, of all people in the world, understand what I have been doing these past twenty years to promote the works of the Powys family. Some day, I hope to present my collection of Powys material to some American or British library. Many of my librarian friends have requested me to turn over my Powys archives to them... I still have plenty of copies of your THE BROTHERS POWYS, Royal Society piece which I shall be glad to send you "gratis" if you want copies for your friends. I have lost several thousands of dollars

publishing this and other publications which closely concern the Powys family. I am not complaining. This is simply a statement because, like you, I consider myself (with no claim to being an authority) one of the people who have tried to bring the Powys family through a period of twenty years to the attention of people who really matter and might care. I honestly think the singular thing about my devotion to the Powys family is the fact that I am a very busy, business executive who makes a hobby of literature.¹⁴²

But ultimately Siberell's interest in the AAPS faltered despite prodding and encouragement by Lawrence Thompson to develop international membership in the Society and a 'modest' publishing program. In 1957, Siberell agreed 'about getting out a Powys Society newsletter ... I will try to get some "copy" to you in the next couple of weeks.'¹⁴³ But four months later, he pleaded the exigencies of moving house as a reason for neglecting the newsletter — while also informing Thompson of his acceptance of yet another task, the shared editorial responsibility for a new quarterly, *The Ohioana Magazine*. The Anglo-American Powyseana Society, which Siberell began with his eternal enthusiasm, languished. No newsletter was ever published and the Society simply ceased to be.

Siberell spent the last years of his life working as the local agent of the Norfolk & Western Railway in Columbus. He devoted much of his time to his collections, enjoying his hobbies, and pursuing an interest in cookery with his second wife, Alma. He had never travelled widely beyond his early trips to New York City and upstate New York and could boast of never having flown in an airplane, owning a motor car or having the desire to do either. Alma Siberell poignantly described this final period in a letter to William Primrose, the violinist. 'We finally bought a lovely old stone house resting solidly on a knoll amid towering trees ... We named it Gibraltar House, and settled in with our vast collections of books, glass, etc., etc. In less than a dozen years Lloyd was looking forward to a leisurely return to the literary life when he died very suddenly — in December of '68 — just nine days before his scheduled retirement from the N & W Railway'¹⁴⁴ He was 63 years old.

An often repeated statement that the Powys Archives were to go to a library was not realized. Siberell himself had long abandoned the idea that the collection would be presented as a gift. In 1965 he wrote 'I'm not about to give this collection "for free" to any library. Right now Colgate University Library is dickering to buy it.'¹⁴⁵ In addition to the Powys Archives, the Siberell library included extensive collections of first editions of Thomas Beer, Arthur Davison Ficke, Edgar Lee Masters, Charles J. Finger, André Gide, Richard le Gallienne, Dorothy Richardson, Louis Marlow/Louis Wilkinson and D. H. Lawrence; fine and private press publications; 'books about books'; books on glass, railroads, erotica, tobacco and smoking, wine and wine-making; fore-edge paintings; and illustrated books by Lynd Ward — all reflecting Siberell's eclectic interests. Negotiations to sell portions of the collection began in 1970 with Lawrence Thompson acting as an adviser to Alma Siberell.

Alma was particularly interested in keeping the Powys collection intact. She wrote to Parke-Bernet Galleries in 1973 that she was 'especially anxious that the Powys collection be kept together and that it retain its identity as the Lloyd Emerson Siberell Collection of Powyseana, thereby serving as a fitting memorial to Mr. Siberell's many years of devotion to the works of this fabulous family and to his tireless search for information and material by and about them'¹⁴⁶ Negotiations to sell the Powys collection at Parke-Bernet fell through but later the same year Alma could report another promising disposition to Thompson. 'I am awaiting word from Dr. Roberts at Texas U ... They are ecstatic over the prospect of getting the Powys collection for the

Research Center Library. It seems they have many, many, many manuscripts; but they do not have the mass of books and ephemera that is here. The collection will be kept together and will retain its identity as the Lloyd Emerson Siberell Collection—it will be available to scholars — there will be an exhibit — and there will be a catalogue, hopefully while I am still living.¹⁴⁷ Yet again an agreement failed to be consummated.

Four years later Alma contacted Bertram Rota Ltd., Booksellers in London, and received a courteous reply from Anthony Rota noting his firm's long association with Siberell and expressing his interest in purchasing the Powys material. Alma's response was less than immediate. Three years later she answered, referring to 'your letter of 8 November 1977, I still have all the Powys material and I now feel I should move toward disposing of it lest some unforeseen catastrophe befall it. It would be a tragedy if it should fall into the hands of someone who knows not what a fantastic collection it is ... Are you still interested in discussing purchase?'¹⁴⁸ Rota responded in the affirmative immediately thereafter in July, 1980, but was not to finalize the sale until 1985. The negotiations to purchase the collection were a testimony to Rota's fine sense of patience and statesmanship, ultimately requiring a journey to Columbus to complete. The collection was offered for sale by Bertram Rota Ltd. in 1987 as *The Powys Family & Their Circle* in Rota's Catalogue No. 244 and Periodicals Supplement. In 1989, Siberell's remaining papers were presented to the Ohio State University Libraries by the guardian of Alma Siberell's estate.

Kenneth Hopkins's assessment captured the essence of the life of the 'Incomparable Siberell'. Hopkins recalled:

Siberell's main interest in life was books and bibliography; he was a great collector and propagandist for the Powys brothers, especially John Cowper; and like Trovillion, he was in touch with writers and readers and printers and publishers all over the world, and like all such enthusiasts he loved to introduce his friends to one another. His little magazines, *The Book Collector's Packet* and *Imprimatur* are a mine of useful information about the literary scene of the thirties and forties. Siberell was a great encourager of young writers and artists, and tirelessly anxious to find them patrons and publishers and *paid work*. To write or paint is fine, but to get paid as well is very heaven.¹⁴⁹

In later years Siberell abandoned his more 'Extravagantic' literary projects. He had come to a more pragmatic view of the differing roles of vocation and avocations in his life. He reflected:

Literature is only a hobby with me because as I have progressed as a business man ... I have had to neglect my literary proclivities ... I am neither a snob nor an intellectual. I am simply a literary enthusiast ... I'm not a prima donna and I don't consider myself a celebrity. I believe that life's an art and I try my best to live it that way. In other words, "his soul was like a star and dwelt apart" or "he walks alone" is not the category to which I belong ... I live mostly by the J.C.E philosophy expressed at the end of his A PHILOSOPHY OF SOLITUDE "Give yourself up to the rain and the wind and the night, for the burden of matter is the in-drawn breath of a word that may change all." Sounds odd doesn't it coming from the mouth of a man who daily practices "the art of business wisdom" as I do? But it sort of ties in with another idea that J.C.P. once expressed that "Culture is what you have left after you've forgotten everything that you've learned."¹⁵⁰

Lloyd Emerson Siberell, the Ohio 'Extravagantic', truly relished life in all its aspects, particularly as illuminated through his enjoyment of literature. He was well content, as he once wrote, to be 'just a bibliomaniac who has specialized in reading and collecting the works of the Powys brothers.'¹⁵¹

Lloyd Emerson Siberell

A Bibliography of Powys-related Monographs and Journal Articles

AS AUTHOR

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NOTES

The unpublished correspondence cited below is held by the following: OSUL — Lloyd Emerson Siberell Papers, Rare Books and Manuscripts, The Ohio State University Libraries; YALE — The Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University; NLW — The National Library of Wales; and by the Author. Almost all correspondence at OSUL is a carbon copy or transcription of originals as retained by Siberell for his files. The author wishes to thank Gerald Pollinger, Sue Siberell Conaway, Anthony Rota and members of The Powys Society for their kind assistance.

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³ L. E. Siberell, letter to V. M. Gear, 4 February 1938. (OSUL)

⁴ L. E. Siberell, letter to E. Fullerton, 29 April 1953. (OSUL)

⁵ T. F. Powys, letter to L. E. Siberell, 24 March 1932. (Author)

⁶ T. F. Powys, letter to L. E. Siberell, 21 March 1933. (Author)

- ⁷ L. E. Siberell, letter to L. Brussel, 28 August 1934. (OSUL)
- ⁸ J. C. Powys, letter to L. E. Siberell, 18 April 1932. (NLW)
- ⁹ Ll. Powys, letter to L. E. Siberell, 21 March 1933. (OSUL & YALE)
- ¹⁰ Ll. Powys, letter to L. E. Siberell, 23 May 1933. (OSUL & YALE)
- ¹¹ J. C. Powys, letter to L. E. Siberell, 27 June 1932. (NLW)
- ¹² L. E. Siberell, notes, 17 July 1933. (OSUL)
- ¹³ Ibid.
- ¹⁴ J. C. Powys, letter to L. E. Siberell, 7 June 1933. (NLW)
- ¹⁵ J. C. Powys, letter to L. E. Siberell, 19 August 1933. (NLW)
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